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March 25, 1981.

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18. ON A COLLECTION OF COBITID LOACHES OF THE GENUS
NOEMACHEILUS VAN HASSELT FROM POONCH VALLEY
(JAMMU AND KASHMIR)

Cobitid loaches of the genus *Noemacheilus* van Hasselt (sub-family: Noemacheilinae) are typical rheophilous teleosts which prefer pure-oxygen-rich waters with sandy or gravelly bottoms and are met with in the rivers and streams of mountainous Asia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Europe, Turkey, the Transcaucasian region and England. During the course of extensive collections of aquatic fauna undertaken by me in Poonch Valley from 1971 to 1973 six species of *Noemacheilus* were collected, out of which three species are being reported from Poonch Valley for the first time.

well as Ceylon (Day 1878). Singh (1964) recorded it from the Doon Valley while Khan & Kamal (1979) reported this species from River Kosi (Bihar). There is no record of this species from Kashmir Valley so far and the only previous report of its occurrence in Jammu & Kashmir State is by Das & Nath (1965) and Das & Nath (1971), who reported it from Poonch Valley. Subsequently, Malhotra, Jyoti & Dutta (1975) recorded it from the fish ponds at Gadigarh (Jammu).

N. gracilis Day is a high altitude cobitid which inhabits the head waters of the Indus

Species	Locality	Previous record from Poonch Valley
1. <i>Noemacheilus botia</i> (Ham.)	Ponch River	Das & Nath (1971)
2. <i>N. gracilis</i> Day	Poonch River and Sooran torrent	Sharma & Sharma (1974)
3. <i>N. kashmirensis</i> Hora	Poonch River and Sooran torrent	Sharma & Sharma (1974)
*4. <i>N. rupicola</i> McCl.	Poonch River and canals	—
*5. <i>N. marmoratus</i> (Heckel)	Sooran torrent	—
*6. <i>N. vittatus</i> (Heckel)	Sooran torrent	—

* New Record.

Noemacheilus botia (Ham.) occurs in Sind, Punjab, Assam, the upper regions of the Ganges and Jumna, the Nurbudha, as

(Day 1878). Silas (1960) and Das (1965) reported it from Kashmir Valley, while Sharma & Sharma (1974) recorded it from Poonch

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River and adjoining streams. The latest record of this species is from Ladakh by Talwar (1978).

N. kashmirensis Hora is endemic to Kashmir Valley (Silas 1960). It was reported by Sharma & Sharma (1974) from Poonch Valley for the first time but has not been reported from Jammu (Tawi) so far.

N. rupicola McCl. is abundant in Kashmir Valley (Das 1965) and the Doon Valley (Singh 1964). Khan & Kamal (1979) reported it from River Kosi (Bihar). It is the most abundant cobitid loach of Poonch Valley, being found in Poonch River, rivulets, ponds, pools, tanks as well as large drains and rice fields. There being no previous record of this species from Poonch Valley, the present report is an extension of range of this species. It has not been recorded from Jammu (Tawi) so far.

N. marmoratus (Heckel) is a basically lacustrine species, which is abundant in Kashmir lakes (Silas 1960, Das 1965). It was collected from Sooran torrent (Poonch Valley) by me and is a new record for that region.

N. vittatus (Heckel) is also endemic to

Kashmir Valley (Silas 1960) but has not been recorded from any part of Jammu Province so far. The present report of the occurrence of this species in Poonch Valley (Sooran torrent) is, therefore, a new record for Jammu Province.

A comparison of the ichthyofauna of Kashmir Valley with that of Poonch Valley reveals that there is a relatively low endemism of the fish fauna in the river systems of Poonch Valley. Probably a geologically-sufficient time lapse has not occurred for the fishes in Poonch Valley to evolve into new species, which offers a sharp contrast to the ichthyofauna of the older river systems of Kashmir region (Das & Nath 1965, 1971).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to Dr. A. G. K. Menon, Dy. Director, Southern Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, Madras and Dr. A. K. Datta of the Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta, for confirming the identification of the present collection.

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October 18, 1980.

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